

Tojo's Tyranny

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Summary: Tojo becomes corrupted by Hago's staff, and creates his own whole new brand of mayhem...

***Chapter 1*: Chapter 1: The Secret Hiding Place**

AN: After a little break yesterday, I'm back with another story. Can you believe that there will only be seven stories left after this? We'll all be clutching tissues by the time I'm done, crying our eyes out. Still, that's a little while away yet. Instead, we can enjoy the return of Tama and Tojo. I know how much you love 'em.

Tojo's Tyranny

Chapter One: The Secret Hiding Place

Tojo really hated Tama.

Well, he used to. Ever since enslaving him, he had always despised her and everything that she stood for. Hated, hated, hated her. She never treated him like he was an actual form of life; she always had to treat him like he was nothing. A piece of dirt that nobody ever cared about. Something that no one ever paid any attention. That was how she liked to treat her little 'slave'.

But deep down, he always knew that there was something... good about her. Something that meant she wasn't completely evil. And over time, Tojo saw that Tama was beginning to realise that. After the constant failed schemes to rule the Pride Lands and take Prince Simba as her boyfriend, Tama discovered that she wasn't as bad as she thought she was. In fact, she had the capacity to become good. To help others.

And that was what she did. Tojo confessed his undying love for her, and ever since she had been a happy and caring cub. Nothing was going to make her turn to the dark side ever again. She had completely changed. For the better.

Tojo had always been a good cub, of course. It was just in his nature. He was born that way. Always good, always honest, always kind. Some would consider him one of the purest animals on earth. He would rarely ever show signs of anger against anyone. Not even Tama.

But that was all going to change...

"Tojo... Tojo... Tojo!"

Tama's yelling jolted Tojo awake. "Wh-what is it, Tama?" he mumbled, rolling from the rock he was sleeping on and hitting the ground. "Ow."

"Tojo, you really need to stop doing this all the time," Tama told him. "All you do is sleep these days. All of the time. What, are the dreams better than real life or something?" She frowned. "It's not like you."

"I don't know," Tojo said, getting to his paws. He shrugged. "I guess I'm just feeling a bit more tired."

"You went to sleep yesterday," Tama corrected him. "In the middle of the afternoon." Tama had to admit, it was very weird. Tojo was the type of cub who would wake up very early in the morning and go to sleep late in the night. If there was anyone who was going to sleep late into the day, then it was her, surely?

"Tama, I'm fine," Tojo lied. "Really."

He didn't tell her about the nightmares. He never did.

Well, they weren't exactly nightmares. Just very weird dreams. Dreams that could, in fact, be considered as a *good* thing. Thoughts of power kept rushing through his head at unfathomable speeds. Visions of control and being the ultimate life form coursed through his brain at a rate he couldn't control. He kept on picturing himself as ruling over the entire world. Every single night.

He couldn't get enough of it. It was like a rush of energy and sheer exhilaration—far better than his dull life with Tama. Sure, she was great and all—but the lust for control was far stronger. It was taking over his mind. Every time he woke up, he just wanted to enslave someone. He couldn't explain it.

And it was all because of that staff.

The last time Tama and Tojo had come into contact with Hago, he had kicked them straight out of their home in order to make a new spot for him to retire. He very nearly succeeded, but Tama managed to trick him into firing a blast of his own magical energy straight at himself. He was killed instantly, and the only thing that remained of him now was his staff.

The staff...

Tojo suddenly remembered something, and began walking off. "Uh... I have to go," he mumbled quickly.

"What?" Tama hurried after him. "Tojo, wait—where are you going? You can't just run off without telling me where you're going!"

"Why not?" Tojo shot back rudely over his shoulder, surprising Tama. "It's all you used to do back in the day. I remember when you left me in the middle of that desert for hours. I was practically melting by the time you got back!"

"Oh, don't go bringing up the past," Tama replied, rolling her eyes. "I've lost count of how many times I've apologised. Millions—probably."

"Just saying sorry isn't good enough, though, is it?" Tojo said, staring at her angrily now. Tama couldn't comprehend why he was acting like this. It just wasn't him. "You need to make up for it in a better way. You still practically act the way you used to."

"Tojo, I know I was horrible back then," Tama said. "I admit that. But... the way I am now, that's just a joke. I'm only trying to entertain you. If it's really upsetting you, then fine. I'll stop. You don't just have to keep all your feelings trapped inside. You can always tell me, you know."

"No," Tojo said. "I can still see that you're evil. You don't respect me enough. Why don't you treat me better, Tama? It's about time you saw me for the cub I really am. Why don't you give me stuff, or something?"

"Tojo, how could you say such a thing?" Tama exclaimed, horrified. "What's *wrong* with you?"

"I think for the first time something is finally right," Tojo declared, before trotting out of his home.

Tama was just left staring at the spot where he was once stood, dumbstruck.

She's wrong. I'm right, Tojo thought as he stomped through the jungle. His head was burning with anger for Tama. Why did she always have to mistreat him so badly? She didn't care about him at all. *She's wrong. I'm right*.

And he didn't even really love her, anyway.

Oh, no. Not really. He was just being... patient. Yeah. That sounded right. He just didn't want her to lose her mind and go back to her old psychopathic ways, so he just *pretended* to love her. That was supposed to keep her quiet. It was supposed to shut her up. And, perhaps, finally make her respect Tojo for who he was.

A god among lions.

Of course. Things soon started to make sense for Tojo. He'd always known that he was special. That he was... different from the other animals. He knew that he should be the eternal ruler of this jungle. All would bow before him and tremble with fear. He would be their master.

He would become... the Jungle King.

You'll make her pay, Tojo thought angrily. His mind was beginning to swirl with visions of revenge and hate. *You'll make her pay. She isn't ever going to disrespect you again. She will be very sorry...*

Tojo noticed a tree with a couple of claw marks slashed across it. He smiled. This was exactly where he needed to be. He had made the claw marks in order to indicate the secret hiding place for what he wanted. What he needed for his revenge.

He turned left at the tree, continuing onwards until he came to a cluster of bushes. They were so tall that no one—unless they happened to be an elephant—would ever be able to see over the top of them.

Tojo giggled evilly. "Here we are..." he said sinisterly, in an evil voice that really didn't suit him. "Tama is going to regret ever messing with me."

You're going to hurt her, he told himself. *You're going to make her cry and beg for mercy. And then, when she can't take any more, you're going to kill her.*

At that point, it was as if Tojo's better nature seemed to appeal to himself. *What? No! I can't kill Tama!* He backed away in shock, as if horrified at what he had been thinking. *Oh, no. What was I thinking? How could I even think about doing such*

a horrible thing?

He began to consider turning around and apologising to Tama for what he had said, when a new voice suddenly invaded his mind.

Tojo, the voice said. *You know what you have to do.*

Tojo blinked, and then suddenly his personality seemed to change once more. *Yes. I know what I have to do. I'm going to destroy Tama for taking everything that I love away from me. She's ruined my life—and she will pay the price for it.* He laughed evilly once more, seemingly forgetting that moments ago he found his actions to be horrific.

Tojo continued onwards through the bushes, pushing them aside with his underdeveloped claws and walking right through.

He found himself in a small circle of dirt, surrounded on all sides by very tall trees. It was as if the area was fenced off from the rest of the world. Secluded and secret. The perfect hiding place.

And in the centre of this circle, a long, thin, object was sticking out of the ground.

It was Hago's staff.

No one could ever mistake it for anything else. It was thin, golden and the top looked like the head of a vicious cobra. Tojo could see its eyes glowing red at him even now... Calling him to it. Entrancing him.

I... must... do it, Tojo thought, walking slowly towards the staff. *Must... destroy... Tama. Must... have... revenge...*

Tojo could feel the staff speaking to him. It wanted him to kill Tama—and anyone else who had ever done him wrong—before claiming his rightful place as the ultimate ruler of the jungle. Destructive thoughts pounded his mind. He pictured Tama dying, blasted by the energy of the staff. Over and over again. It gave him a sick pleasure that he couldn't possibly comprehend. All thoughts of love for her had been squeezed from his head like a wet sponge.

Slowly, with a paw, Tojo reached out for the staff. As it inched closer and closer to the magical object, the power seemed to grow. From the moment he touched it, he knew he would be the strongest life form in the world.

Tojo's claws finally gripped around the staff—

—and he screamed.

***Chapter 2*: Chapter 2: What Has to Be Done**

Chapter Two: What Has to Be Done

"Look... I'm sorry. I know we've been together for a long time, and I know that you love me. But... I just don't love you anymore. We're just... not connecting. I'm really sorry. Oh, don't cry..."

Haiba rolled his eyes and walked away from the bush. "Women," he scoffed. He headed over to the river by Jowai Resort. "Well, hello there. You've certainly got some thrashing waves, haven't you? How'd ya like to make some more?"

"Haiba, are you flirting with nature again?" Nala called from across the river.

"Uh... no," Haiba said sheepishly, backing away from the edge. "I was just complimenting the river on its features."

"That's the same thing," Simba said, joining him by his side. He looked up at the sky. "Oh, I don't know—something doesn't seem right about today. Has anyone noticed that the clouds look a little grey?"

"Yeah," Nala agreed, following his gaze. "They look kinda dull and... lifeless."

"It's just weather," Haiba said. "I'm sure there are plenty of places out there in the world that get rain all the time. Isn't it time for the annual rainfall yet?"

"It's the middle of summer," Nala said. "It should be hotter than ever before. Instead, it feels a little windy." She shivered slightly. "And colder, come to think of it. Maybe something *is* going on..."

"Oh, come on," Haiba said. "Just look at you two—you're always so suspicious. Will there ever come a time where we can sit back, relax and enjoy the day? There always has to be some kind of problem."

"There's not *a/ways* a problem," Simba said. "Yesterday was fine. No bad guys or scary creatures at all."

"You thought there was a monster," Haiba told him. "But it was just a spider on top of your head."

"Well, apart from that," Simba said. "Still, I think there may be something funny going on... I can't explain it. I just know."

A voice screamed in the distance.

The three cubs looked up to see Ugaidi charging right for them. But he missed and tripped over, falling flat on his back. His eyes slammed shut, motionless.

Simba, Nala and Haiba stared down at him.

"Ugaidi?" Nala called softly.

"*Magic!*" Ugaidi yelled, instantly awake. "Magic! Magic! Everywhere! Coming to destroy us all! Flee! *Flee for your lives!*"

"Ugaidi, calm down," Nala said. She glanced at Simba. "Looks like you were right about something being up."

"What's the problem, Ugaidi?" Haiba asked. "You need a hug?"

"He is here!" Ugaidi proclaimed, with eyes the size of rocks. "Using the power! The power will consume him! And destroy us all! He will tear it apart!"

"Tear *what* apart?" Simba asked.

"*The world!*" Ugaidi responded. "Nothing and no one will be able to stop him! His magic makes him invincible!" He began to cry, sobbing into the ground as he shook with fear.

"Those creatures really messed him up, didn't they?" Haiba asked. "Although I think a romantic night with me would soon fix him."

"It'd make him *worse*," Nala said. "Believe me."

"Hmm... even though Ugaidi is a shivering wreck," Simba said, looking surprisingly optimistic, "I think all signs point to a wizard."

"A wizard?" The implications soon set in for Nala. They had been searching for a wizard for quite a while now, with

limited success. "Oh, yeah."

"It doesn't sound like a *nice* wizard," Haiba said. "Especially if he's going to use his magic to tear the world apart. I hardly think he's going to tell us how to break the magical spell around the Pride Lands. Maybe he's even the animal who *put* the magical spell on the Pride Lands."

"Or Ugaidi could just be out of his mind," Nala suggested. "You know he's not exactly the most stable cub around here. I think all that torture has just clouded his vision."

"But he was right about the Interceptor," Simba said. "And Shocker, too."

Simba, Nala and Haiba all looked at each other and nodded in agreement. They remembered their final encounter with Shocker all too well. When he came back from the dead after a long absence, his first thoughts were not to go after them, but to pursue the Interceptor instead. He wanted revenge on him for causing his very long death. Of course—like always—his plan had gone up in smoke, and now he was rotting away at the bottom of a grave, choking on earth for all of eternity.

"So I'm right in saying that Ugaidi might possibly be able to see into the future?" Haiba asked. Simba and Nala just stared at him, wanting an explanation. "Oh, yeah, sure. I bet he keeps getting visions every once in a while. Not intentionally, of course. He doesn't know what it means; he just repeats it to us in a very loud ramble."

"So no matter how many times he tells us what's going on," Nala said, "we can't ask him?"

"Nope," Haiba said, shaking his head. "Sorry to say, but Ugaidi is probably just a shell of his former self. He doesn't know what to think of anything. He can barely even speak."

"*The magic...*" Ugaidi whimpered, tossing and turning on the ground. "It's in our heads... in *all* of our heads..."

"Jeez, the way he is, you'd think Hago's been torturing him," Simba said, staring at Ugaidi with concern. He couldn't imagine what it would be like. To have practically no mind and visions of the future plaguing you everywhere you turned. It sounded like hell. "Poor guy."

"I think we'd better take a look around," Haiba said, turning away from Ugaidi. "You never know what wizards may be lurking around here..."

"Yeah—come on," Simba said, ushering his friends forward. "I don't want us to get caught up in some kind of deadly trap. *Again.*"

Sarafina...

Yes, master, Sarafina thought, staring straight ahead, eyes glowing green. *I will obey you.*

You know what you have to do, Hago's voice whispered in her head. He had been inside her mind ever since taking her over a while ago—right around the time when Simba and his friends made the journey to find the Hermit of Hekima. *You know that you have to kill them.*

Yes... Sarafina agreed, tilting her head to the side, as if processing her master's orders. *Kill my friends. Kill my family.* Her green eyes seemed to grow even brighter now. *Kill them all.*

And then you will kill yourself, Hago continued, *so nothing will remain of Simba's pride. Do you understand, Sarafina?*

Yes, master, Sarafina thought. *I will kill myself. I am obedient to you.*

Good. Hago laughed evilly. *Very good indeed...*

In the blink of an eye, Hago's voice disappeared from her head. Sarafina's eyes returned to their normal colour, and she carried on like nothing had ever happened. "Zazu, are you up in that tree again?"

"I'm resting," Zazu replied, eyes closed as he stood on his perch. "After being stunned by a cub with extraordinary lightning powers, I think I deserve a quiet nap. You should follow my example."

"Be thankful that he didn't kill you," Sarafina teased, smiling up at the hornbill. "You were talking so much I thought he might blast you into a pile of feathers."

"Don't you have better things to do than to bother me, Sarafina?" Zazu asked, finally opening his eyes to look down on

her.

"Not really," Sarafina shrugged. "The cubs get on with whatever they want while I just hang around here. Alone." She almost looked sad at the thought. "You're the only animal around here that's the same age as me."

"I think you will find that I'm considerably younger than you," Zazu replied. "You look at least five years older."

"I'm not *that* old," Sarafina retorted. "It feels like I've been young for years, in fact. You, too. You don't look a day older than when we first met."

"How very flattering," Zazu said, "but it won't get you anywhere. Now, leave. I'm trying to get on with some important work called sleeping."

"Fine. Suit yourself," Sarafina said, before turning and walking away. "I'll just go and see what Nala's doing."

Sarafina. She stopped again, under Hago's control once more. *Kill the hornbill. Go on. You know you want to. It is his time.*

Wh-what? Sarafina shook her head slightly, half in the trance and half out. *N-no. I can't kill Zazu—*

Do it! Hago ordered, instigating his control to the fullest extent. *Everyone in this tiny pride of Simba's must die. Only then will I be able to make my return and take my rightful place as ruler of this earth. Now, start with the hornbill. Make him scream.*

Yes... Sarafina could not resist. She knew what she had to do. Zazu would be first, followed by Ugaidi, then Haiba, then Nala and finally Simba. Then her master would be back to cause a thousand years of darkness.

She slowly extended her claws, ready to pounce on the hornbill and tear him to shreds. "Oh, Zazu?"

"Oh, what now?" Zazu grumbled, opening his eyes again.

It was far too late for him to do anything as Sarafina attacked...

AN: A naughty little cliffhanger for you. I know how much you love them and want me to keep writing them. It's not like you're all going to form an angry mob and crucify me just for teasing you. You're too nice, right?

Anyway, what do you all think about Tojo, huh? Something's not right with that little guy. Hago is up to something sneaky... but what? You'll have to find out in the next two chapters.

Chapter 3: Chapter 3: Tama's Torture

AN: Hello again! Well, last time, we saw Tojo finally take command of Hago's staff. Will he cause utter destruction and mayhem? Let's find out in these next couple of chapters.

the-mysterious-other: I have no plans to delete any of these stories whatsoever. I deleted those other ones because I hate them. They're really bad, and I don't care for them anymore. I wouldn't worry about being able to relive any of these moments over and over again. *The Lion King Adventures* is here to stay.

anonymous13: A lot of speculation seems to surround Ugaidi at the moment. Hopefully we'll be able to explore more of his character a little bit later on. *Hago's Little Puppet* was a fun story to write, by the way. Makes me feel all nostalgic about Series One. I reiterate my point that I won't be getting rid of any of these stories. They may not be perfect, but they're good enough for me.

Chapter Three: Tama's Torture

Tojo's mouth was wide open as his paw gripped around the staff, power coursing through his veins. The sheer force of the energy being thrust right into his body was enough to make him cry out in a mixture of both pain and pleasure. It was difficult to describe. His mind was telling him to let go, to end it all—but his body was practically *screaming* for more. He could feel himself getting stronger and stronger with each passing second. He was slowly adopting Hago's powers. The staff was tuning itself into him. Every deadly ability and each incredible skill.

Before long, he would be the most powerful cub on the planet.

Tojo laughed evilly, finally pulling the staff out of the ground. "Yes! At last!" he exclaimed, grinning triumphantly. "The power is mine! It's *all* mine!"

As a look crossed his face, as he turned to a nearby tree, aiming the staff at it. He fired off a green blast of energy, which hit the tree and blew it into oblivion. Wood splintered to the ground all around him as he giggled maniacally. "The power... *the absolute power!*"

He stared at the staff grasped in his forepaws, transfixed by it. Just the mere thought of having all the power and control in the universe made him shudder with excitement. He couldn't wait to try it out on a suitable target...

Tojo's eyes flared up with anger as a name popped into his head.

Tama.

Of course. Tama. That little runt. How dare she treat him like a slave who didn't even deserve to exist! Well, he was going to give her a taste of her own medicine! He was going to make her pay for death!

"Tama..." Tojo grit his teeth. Just thinking about her—saying her name, even—was enough to make his blood boil. "I... hate... Tama!"

He blew up another tree in anger, before sending a jet of flame shooting towards the tall bushes. They ignited in seconds, flames flickering everywhere. Tojo laughed in glee, before leaving the scene.

"I'm coming, Tama—to make sure that you pay for everything you've done to me!"

Tama lay glumly on her back, in the spot where Tojo was once sleeping. Before they had quite a vicious argument and he stormed off, of course. She sighed, thinking about how things had gone so horribly wrong between them. They never argued. At least, not like *that*. She even doubted that he had it in him to be so angry with her. They had been at each other's throats in the past—particularly when she was using him as a slave—but never in a way like this. It was odd, she had to admit. She could have viciously attacked him and he wouldn't have reacted so harshly.

"Oh, Tojo..." she whispered quietly. "What's wrong with you?"

Sadly, her problems were about to become much worse.

A sudden smell of burning invaded Tama's nose. She sniffed the air, detecting the pungent scent of smoke. "Oh, what's going on now?"

She got her answer.

A blast of magical energy hit Tama in the face, knocking her clean off her paws and flat on her back. She could tell whenever someone was using magical energy, thanks to her being magical herself. Although her powers weren't exactly the best... Whoever had just shot her was an expert. A fully formed, deadly magician. He certainly didn't sound friendly...

Tama coughed out smoke, feeling the burning effect of the blast. It wasn't fatal—but it was certainly mean to sting its target. Her chest felt as though it was on fire. "Who... who's there?" she demanded, looking around. "I know you're a wizard, so just show yourself!"

But no one was there. The smell of something burning still hung in the air, as another blast attacked her from the side. "Ow!" she cried, collapsing to her side once more. That shot was even stronger; her whole body was smoking, aching all over.

Through weary eyes, Tama stared at a wall of smoke in front of her, as a figure stepped out from within. Her eyes grew wide with horror at who she saw stood there, clutching a golden staff and grinning with sickening pleasure.

It was Tojo.

"Hello, hello, hello, Tama," he greeted her, smiling as if there wasn't a care in the world. "Looks like you need a little assistance."

"T-T-Tojo," she coughed, weakly managing to hoist herself upwards. But the pain was too strong. She didn't think she could keep her eyes open for much longer... "Wh-what are you d-d-doing?"

"What's right," Tojo replied, before blasting her in the chest with another bolt. She screamed in agony, rolling across the ground until she came to rest at a tree. Her eyes were seconds away from closing. "Oh, no, no, no." He rushed over to Tama, pulling her upwards by the fur on top of her head. "You're don't get the sweet release of sleep just yet. The fun is only beginning."

"What's happened to you?" Tama moaned, in horrible pain. "Why are you doing this?"

"You tortured me for months, Tama," Tojo told her, sounding totally unconcerned by the fact that she was in awful pain. "*Months*. You have no idea how much pain and misery you've caused me. It's only fair that I should exact some revenge with my newfound powers."

"This isn't like you," she said, her eyes flickering, struggling to remain awake. "We... we love each other."

"No, Tama," Tojo said, shaking his head. "*You* love me. I don't love *you*. I just said that so you'd shut up. Luckily for you, I'm patient. I wouldn't want you to go insane and start killing other animals." He giggled evilly. "That's *my* job now!"

She stared at the staff he clasped in one paw. It was sparkling with golden energy. *That staff...* she thought, recognising it. *Hago. It's his staff. It's allowing him to do this.* "Where... where did you get that?"

"Oh, this?" Tojo glanced at the staff, holding it up. It seemed to glint in the sunlight. As if it was a coveted treasure. "Well, this is what's going to allow me to become the god of all animals. No one will ever be able to stand up to me when I have all the power in the world. And if they *do* try to resist..." He fired off a red blast into a tree; it exploded instantly upon impact. "Well, use your imagination."

Tama weakly raised a paw in an attempt to grab the staff from him, but he intercepted her move and smacked her across the cheek with it. She winced, tears streaming down her face at the throbbing pain. "Tojo... please... stop..."

"Why would I stop?" Tojo asked. "You never did. This is right, Tama. You know it is. If you don't like it, then you shouldn't have tortured me in the first place. You should have treated me like an actual life form—rather than a piece of dirt that nobody cares about. Don't you understand that now?"

"You're much worse than I ever was..." Tama said quietly, hanging her head low. It was quite obvious now that Tojo was going to kill her. She didn't know why—she had no idea—but she did know that her death was imminent. And he was going to make sure that it was as slow and painful as possible.

Tojo grabbed her by the throat, slamming her right up against a tree. "And now, Tama, it's finally time for you to go."

"Tojo... please don't do this," Tama pleaded. "I know you're in there somewhere. I know you love me. I don't know what's happened to you, but I can fix it. We can get... help or something. Just don't kill me. I'm begging you. Please."

Tojo just laughed cruelly, causing Tama to cry even more. "I don't think so, Tama. The only way out of this is for you to die. You're my worst enemy. I can't believe I actually even used to *like* you. It's ridiculous. But I was stupid back then." He

glanced at the staff. "Not any more..."

Tama could only stare into Tojo's eyes, seeing that he meant every single word he'd said. He hated her. He really did. And now she was going to die knowing that. Her one true love was going to bring an end to her life... How cruel was that?

Tojo raised the staff, placing the end of it to Tama's chest. "I think I've got a delightful little spell from Death that will end your life in the most painful way possible." He chuckled. "Goodbye, Tama."

The end of the staff began to glow a bright black, and Tama screamed as the most horrifying pain imaginable rocked her body. She thrived and squirmed around, almost losing her mind from the intensity of the suffering. In all her life, she had never wanted to die so badly. Not even when she was on the edge of that cliff, so long ago...

Tojo just stared into her eyes, pleased by her agony. *Revenge is sweet*, he thought, and smiled as Tama began to die.

Chapter 4: Chapter 4: The Might of Tojo

Chapter Four: The Might of Tojo

Zazu let out a squeal of horror as he flew away from Sarafina, just before she could swipe at him with her claws. One second sooner and he would have been torn to bits! "Sarafina, I demand to know why you're acting so hostile towards me!"

Sarafina only growled, and pounced at the hornbill again. Zazu flew higher into the sky, totally out of her reach by now. "This is ridiculous. Why do all these horrible things have to happen to me? Is a quiet life just too much to ask for?"

Sarafina growled up at Zazu. "Come back down here, you little pest," she snarled. "It's time for you to meet your maker."

"I'd rather not, if it's all the same with you," Zazu said, looking down on the furious lioness. He couldn't quite figure out why she was acting so violently towards him—but he had an inkling that it had something to do with the fact that her eyes were glowing a bright green. It looked as though someone was controlling her.

"I must kill you," Sarafina told him. "I must do it. For my master."

"Your master?" Zazu repeated, narrowing his eyes in confusion. "What on earth is going on today?" A thought occurred to him. "I suppose I'll have to tell Simba." He began to fly away.

"No! Come back!" Sarafina yelled, but Zazu of course didn't listen. "*Come back!*"

I told you to destroy them! Hago raged in her mind. *And you've failed me! Now you will pay the price!*

"I'm sorry, master," Sarafina said, bowing her head in shame. "He was too quick for me to catch."

"Hmm?" Zazu looked over his shoulder upon hearing Sarafina speak, flying back to where she was. "Who on earth is she talking to?"

Pathetic! Hago chided. *Absolutely pathetic!*

"I apologise, master," Sarafina said. "I will not fail you ever again."

There won't be any further chances! Hago told her. *You make me sick! I might as well do everything myself! Now, kill yourself!*

"Yes, master," Sarafina obeyed, unable to resist. She slowly put her claws to her throat, ready to end her life. "I will obey you."

Clonk!

From out of nowhere, a rock fell right on top of her head, knocking her out cold before she could commit suicide.

Zazu stared down at her, satisfied that he'd prevented her from killing herself. *So I was right. Someone is controlling her. But who? That's the question.*

He flew off again, satisfied that he'd heard enough.

Just as Tama felt the last of her life ebbing away, she heard a loud *thump!* and watched as Tojo crumpled to the ground. Revealed behind him were Simba, Nala and Haiba.

"Tama, are you all right?" Nala asked, staring at her with a concerned expression.

Tama instantly burst into tears, collapsing in a heap on the ground. She felt like her heart had been torn right from her body. It wasn't the pain that was hurting her the most; it was the fact that Tojo had caused it. She loved him. Even if he didn't feel the same way, as he had clearly demonstrated. It was just heartbreaking to watch him try and kill her like that.

"We could smell burning from nearby," Simba explained to her. "So we decided to take a look—and we found you."

"He tried to kill me!" Tama yelled through sobs. "I don't know why! He was using that staff!"

Simba wandered over to Tojo's unconscious body, staring down at the staff that was still firmly gripped in his paw. "It's... it's Hago's staff," he said in shock, instantly recognising its peculiar design. "How did it get here?"

Haiba narrowed his eyes at the magical object. "He must have kept it," he decided. "Tojo. He obviously wanted to use it to kill Tama."

"What? That's crazy," Nala said. "Tojo would never do such a thing. He's the nicest cub we've ever met."

"He hates me!" Tama cried, tears spilling onto the ground. "I saw it in his eyes. He really hates me."

Simba reached out with a paw to try and take the staff, but it gave him a painful shock as soon as he touched it. "Ow! What the heck's up with this thing? I can't even touch it."

"It's not a bad looking staff," Haiba said, looking it over. "I could certainly think of a few interesting things to do with it..."

"Haiba, please stop feeling attracted to inanimate objects," Nala said. "We're trying to do some serious work here."

"Tama, do you know why we can't touch it?" Simba asked, staring down at her. She looked as though she had lost all hope.

Tama stared down at the ground, feeling utterly depressed. She didn't want to live anymore. "I should have jumped off that cliff," she said. "I would have, too, if I knew that it was all going to end like this."

"Tama, please," Simba urged. "Tell us."

"It's probably protected by some magical energy," Tama explained, not bothering to look up at him. "It'll only respond to its user. Anyone else who tries to use it won't even be able to touch it."

"But why would Tojo want to use it against you?" Nala wondered. "None of this adds up. I thought you two loved each other."

"Yeah," Tama said bleakly. "So did I."

Simba sighed, feeling a pang of sorrow for her. "I'm sorry, Tama. But if we're going to figure this out, then you need to help us. Otherwise—"

"Fine. Whatever," Tama cut in quickly. "I'll do it."

"Okay." Simba surveyed the area, sniffing the air. "The smell of smoke is getting stronger. Those fires must be getting closer to here. We'd better move. Haiba, you can carry Tojo, can't you?"

"Me? Carry an incredibly cuddly cub?" Haiba asked. He grinned. "No complaints from me."

"Good. Now, we'll have to—"

Simba stopped midsentence as he was hit in the back by a bolt of energy. He grunted in pain, his body smoking from the hot impact. "What the—?"

"Oh, no," Nala said worriedly.

Tojo was awake once more, aiming the staff carefully at them all. "You knocked me out," he said. "You're going to regret ever doing that."

"Tojo, what's got into you?" Nala cried. "Can't you see that you're hurting all of your friends?"

Tojo just laughed. "With friends like you, who needs enemies? What a joke. You've done nothing but cause me misery. All of you. First Tama enslaves me, then you three cubs keep bringing psychos into my life. Well, now I'm going to make sure that no one bothers me ever again. You will all die, and I shall be the god of this world."

"Only someone evil talks like that," Simba said, clambering to his paws, staring at Tojo with contempt. "I wouldn't be surprised if this was your plan all along."

"Simba!" Nala looked at him, horrified.

"What? It's probably true," Simba said, focusing his eyes on the evil Tojo. "He could have been fooling us from day one—just like Tama did. She almost killed you and me both, Nala. I bet Tojo wants to do the same."

"I was foolish back then," Tojo told them. "I actually thought of you as friends. But soon after our little encounter with Hago, things began to change. The only remnant of power he left behind was his staff. Oh, you should have seen what it

felt like when I first touched it. It made me feel like the greatest life form on earth... A true ruler."

Simba and Nala glanced at each other as Tojo told his story, realising at the same time that he had turned utterly insane.

"Ever since I first touched it, I could feel it calling me," Tojo continued. "It wanted me to embrace its power. And now... I finally have." He raised the staff. It was glowing a bright gold colour now, practically throbbing with energy. "You can see the power it grants me. I am truly invincible."

"We'll just see about that," Simba said angrily. "We're going to stop you, Tojo. You can't go around hurting others for no reason."

"There is nothing you can do," Tojo responded calmly. "I can pick you off easily from this point. Just watch." He fired a deadly-looking green bolt at Simba, who rolled out of the way just in time. "See?"

"Stop it, Tojo!" Nala yelled. "You've lost your mind!"

Tojo laughed long and hard, totally corrupted by the power of the staff. "*You* are the ones who are insane! I am a genius! Every animal in the world will bow before me! *No one can stop the all-powerful might of Hago!*"

Nala's mouth dropped open in realisation. "What?"

"I said that no one can stop my all-powerful might!" Tojo said.

"You said Hago," Nala said.

"What?"

"Hago," Nala said, taking a step towards him. "You said Hago. Not Tojo."

"Don't be so stupid," Tojo snapped, aiming the staff at her. "Now, be gone with you!"

"He said Hago," Haiba confirmed. He narrowed his eyes at Tojo. "I think something odd is going on here..."

"Yeah," Simba agreed, staring at Tojo suspiciously. "Something to do with Hago."

"Oh, how right you are," a new voice said.

AN: Yet another cliffhanger! I do love a good bit of tension, don't you? I think you know who's finally showed up, though. But how? Why? I'll answer these questions tomorrow, hopefully. See you then!

Chapter 5: Chapter 5: A Plan Gone Wrong

AN: Time for two more chapters which are sure to shock and amaze you, as we lead up to the inevitable climax. I bet you all thought this was going to be a fun comedy story, didn't you? Oh, well.

kora22: I think every villain wants to be the superior life form. That is the sad way of evil.

Chapter Five: A Plan Gone Wrong

Simba, Nala, Haiba and Tama all looked round in shock upon hearing the voice. Having heard it so many times, they didn't really need to look round at all, because they knew exactly who it was. The one lion who—against all odds—kept coming back to haunt them, again and again and again. He was always there. Like a ghost.

There, stood in front of them, was Hago.

"Hago!" Simba exclaimed, as if he'd figured everything out. "I *knew* it! You have something to do with this, don't you?"

"Yeah!" Nala nodded. "The magic, the staff—it all makes perfect sense! *You're* behind all this!"

"Oh, don't act so surprised," said Hago sarcastically, brushing past the cubs. They failed to notice that he wasn't holding a staff of his own...

"What do you want, Hago?" Simba asked impatiently, watching the magical lion as he wandered casually around the place. "Whatever your plan is, it won't work. We'll just stop you. Over and over again."

"What is the meaning of this?" Tojo demanded, staring angrily at the pathetic worms that were stood before him. They were all pathetic—and he would make sure that nothing remained once he was finished with them. "You are all supposed to be cowering before me in fear!"

"Oh, be silent, you stupid brat," Hago snapped, striding right over to Tojo. "Now, give me my staff—or you'll be very sorry."

"Hey, just who do you think you are?" Tojo asked, aiming the staff threateningly at him. "You'd better stand back before I blast you into oblivion."

"Why do you want the staff?" Nala demanded, eyes focused on Hago. "Tell us, *Hago*." She preferred to use his real name rather than refer to him as 'Dad'. He didn't deserve that title. As far as she was concerned, the only parent she had was her mother.

"Be silent, my foolish daughter," Hago responded rudely, before returning his attention to Tojo. "I said give me the staff."

"No way!" Tojo said, holding up the staff. "I'm going to use this to become the most powerful animal on earth! And *no one* can stop me!"

"Give me that!" Hago grabbed for the staff, but Tojo held it up higher. The magical lion sighed. "This has taken a very sinister turn."

"What is he *talking* about?" Haiba asked in bemusement.

"You wouldn't understand, you dumb little cretins," Hago replied, turning to the cubs. "I've been devising a resurrection plan for months now—and it's all gone horribly wrong. No thanks to you."

"Us?" Nala said. "We're just trying to stop Tojo from ripping apart the whole world with your stupid magic!"

Hago stared down at the ground, chuckling. "The whole *point* was for him to take the staff," he said, smiling oddly at them. "It was the only way."

"The only way for what?" Simba questions, intensely curious now. He knew this had something to do with Hago—but he had no idea why his plan required Tojo to utilise the power of his staff... "Tell us. *Now*."

"Well, you all know that I hunger for eternal life," Hago told them all. "And if there's ever a chance for a sneaky resurrection, then I'll take it."

"But you're there," Nala said, gesturing to him. "You're standing right in front of us. We can see you. Why do you need Tojo if you're already alive?"

"That's because I'm *not* alive," Hago said, placing both forepaws against his chest. "What you're looking at right now is my spirit. A ghost. I'm not real. I'm not actually *living*."

"You've gotta be kidding me," Haiba said sceptically. "If you were a ghost, then there's no way you could be standing right here like that."

"Oh, really?" Hago said, raising an eyebrow.

"Well, first of all, I'd be able to put my paw right through you." Haiba reached out with a paw—

—and it went right through Hago.

Haiba yanked back his paw in amazement. "Wow. That shut me up."

"Be silent, cub," Hago snarled. "As I'm sure that little... *thing* has clearly demonstrated, I have no physical form. I'm trapped here—nothing more than a worthless ghost." He almost looked saddened by the fact. "This is *abysmal*!"

"So your plan backfired *why* exactly?" Simba asked, still not fully understanding.

"The staff hasn't bonded with him correctly," Hago explained, pointing at Tojo, who was now looking both incredibly confused and frustrated. "It was supposed to allow my spirit to inhabit his body and take it as my own. But something has gone horribly wrong."

"Or horribly right, depending on whose side you're on," Haiba joked, much to the displeasure of Simba and Nala. "What? I'm just trying to keep up the happy atmosphere."

Hago ignored him. "The staff hasn't just granted him magical powers. It's injecting my personality into him. Before long, he's going to think he's *me*!"

It all began to sink in for them. "Oh, dear," Simba said, visibly worried. "If he thinks he's Hago—"

"—then he won't stop until he's destroyed everything," Nala finished for him, sharing the same expression of concern. "He'll just keep killing more and more animals."

"And now I'll be stuck here in this horrible form!" Hago complained, burning on the inside with anger. "Doomed to walk through trees and remain unable to feel anything! Think of all the horrible evil deeds I'll be missing out on! I need that staff!" He stared at it hungrily. "It's the only way to—"

"*That's it!*" Tojo screamed, exploding with rage. "All of you are going to die right here and right now! I am the all-powerful wizard known as Hago! Nothing will ever destroy me! *Nothing!*"

He fired off a red explosive bolt right at Hago. It went straight through his body and struck the ground in the middle of the clearing, causing the other cubs to scatter in any random direction.

"It's already started," Hago realised, stood calmly in the same spot. The ground was now scorched a dark black colour from the explosion. "Before long, he won't even remember a cub called Tojo. Only Hago." He looked upwards in thought. "It's not such a bad change, really. Too bad it doesn't do any good for me."

"Hago, if you wanted your body back so badly, then you should have thought this through," Simba said, cowering from the blast behind a bush. "Now Tojo is going to destroy the whole world! And it's all your fault!"

"I don't care about the safety of anyone else!" Hago said. "All I care about is having a body to inhabit! The longer I remain a ghost, the less visible I'll become. I can already feel myself fading away. Once I'm all gone, I'll cease to exist."

"Good," Nala whispered in Simba's ear.

"Why won't you die?" Tojo said, gritting his teeth as he stared at Hago. "My exploding spell just went right through you. How is this possible?"

"Because I'm a ghost!" Hago proclaimed. "You cannot kill something that is already dead!"

Haiba poked a paw through Hago's chest again. "*Stop that!*"

"Sorry," Haiba said sheepishly, backing away.

"At least he'll get rid of *you*," Hago said, suddenly pointing at Tama. She was lying in the corner, still traumatised by what

Tojo had done to her. At least now it was all being put into perspective for her. "You spoiled the chance of a good retirement for me. I'll take great satisfaction in seeing him wipe you out."

"Leave her alone," Simba said, stepping in front of Tama. "I think you've done enough damage already."

"Me? You have to be kidding," Hago said. "Everything Tojo has done is of his own free will. It's only now that his personality is beginning to change. First of all, the staff relied on his insecurities and fears. Using them in order to create destruction. Now it's going to fill him with only one emotion: hate. It's the emotion that I value the most. Seems very apt."

"Shut up, Hago," Simba said. He turned to Tojo, staring into his eyes. He had to try and get through to him, somehow. Appeal to his better nature. That just might break the staff's spell over him. "Tojo, please. We know you're in there—somewhere. You're not evil. You're not like him. You're our friend. Come on. Just... put down the staff and walk away."

Tojo stared back at him, as if considering the idea.

But then he just laughed. "Not likely!" he said. "I am Hago! The most powerful wizard on earth! I shall never leave the only object that can grant me my powers!"

"It's really freaky hearing him say that," Haiba said. "Slightly... cute, even. I wouldn't mind kissing him right now..."

"You are all weaklings," Tojo told them, brandishing the staff. "Once you are all dead, my work can begin. And I shall rule over a glorious empire that will live on for thousands of years!"

"That's my opportunity to exit," Hago said, and disappeared in a flash.

Simba, Nala and Haiba looked at each other nervously as Tojo advanced towards them...

Chapter 6: Chapter 6: The Only Way

Chapter Six: The Only Way

The end of the staff began to glow a bright orange, and before the cubs knew it flames were shooting out thick and fast. The ground instantly ignited, practically burning Tama and Tojo's home to cinders.

"We've gotta go!" Simba cried urgently, quickly sprinting away as the plants and flowers caught fire all around him.

Haiba was quick to follow him, but Nala stood where she was. "Simba, wait! What about Tama?"

"Oh, yeah!" Simba said, suddenly realising. He hurried over to where Tama was. She was still lying motionless on the ground, looking too miserable to do anything at all. The flames didn't even seem to concern her. Not one bit. It was as though she wanted to die... "Tama, come on! We have to get out of here!"

Tama didn't speak or move. She never even made an indication that she had heard what Simba said. She did nothing. Soulless. "Tama, please! You'll die out here!" She still made no response.

Simba sighed and grabbed Tama, placing her over his back. She made no effort to resist as he ran away, just as the flames completely consumed Tama and Tojo's *former* home.

Tojo laughed gleefully from the other side of the flames, watching the blazing inferno in delight and amazement. "*Burn!* All of you will *burn!*" He shot a few more fireballs into the destruction just for fun. And all the while he was laughing. "You will never escape me! I am Hago! The most powerful wizard of them all!"

Simba, Nala and Haiba didn't stop running until they were a safe distance away from Tojo's widespread destruction. They stopped by a small, dirty river. Not the cleanest of hiding places, but right now they just didn't care. There were much more important things to worry about...

"He's lost his mind," Nala panted, feeling totally exhausted as she collapsed onto the ground. "Hago was right about him."

"I can't believe it," Tama said, finally speaking for the first time in ages. She stared straight ahead, stunned to the very core of her heart. "Did you say the way he... looked at me? He doesn't care one bit. He just... he just wants to kill me."

"I'm sorry, Tama," Nala said, placing a paw on her shoulder. "I really am." It was true. In just a matter of hours, her whole life had been turned on its head. She didn't know what direction there was for her to go in now. What would Tama ever do without Tojo by her side? Especially if what Hago had said was true, and he really *did* think that he was the most evil wizard in the world. Quite a difference to the sweet, pure cub that they used to know.

"No." Simba shook his head. "There's gotta be some way to get through to Tojo. I mean, there's just gotta be. There's always a way."

"That's where you're wrong, kids." Hago's spirit popped into existence right in front of them, shocking them all. "I'm afraid that poor, sweet little Tojo is now forever consumed by the magic of my staff."

"Shut up!" Tama snapped, staring at him through eyes that were blurred with tears. "Just shut up, okay? You have no idea what you've taken from me!"

"You know nothing of loss," Hago said. "I've lost my life—and that's more important than anything, in my opinion."

"You dying was the best thing that ever happened to anyone," Nala told him. "All you do is tear our lives apart."

Hago ignored her, instead choosing to dwell on his own failures. "I had it all so well planned out!" he moaned. "I was going to use your mother to kill you all, and then I could inhabit Tojo's body!"

"My mom?" Nala exclaimed. Anger crossed her face. "Just what the heck have you done with her?"

Hago smiled as a sudden thought occurred to him. He almost completely forgot that he'd ordered Sarafina to commit suicide... "I don't think that you'll be seeing your mother for quite some time, Nala. In fact, maybe never again."

Simba could see the heartbreak in Nala's eyes. "Wh-what do you mean?" she stammered.

"Well—"

"Hold it right there, you nuisance!"

The cubs all looked up to see Zazu flying above their heads. He was glaring angrily at Hago. "How *dare* you try to control an innocent lioness!"

"Zazu?" Simba said, surprised to see him. "What the heck are you doing here?"

"I was almost murdered by Nala's mother!" Zazu explained. "And all because she's under the influence of this pathetic little... whatever he is!"

"I thought I saw the last of you years ago, little bird," Hago said. "I must say, it's been a while. *Lifetimes*, you could say."

"Oh, shut it," Zazu snapped. "I'm not scared of your sinister aura any longer!"

"Zazu, what has he done to my mom?" Nala asked, still looking awfully worried. She was beginning to sympathise with Tama...

"He tried to get her to kill me," Zazu said, "and then she almost killed herself. I managed to subdue her before she could, however. She's lying unconscious in the middle of the resort."

Nala sighed in relief. "Thank you," she told the hornbill. She didn't know how she would ever survive the loss of her only parent...

"Oh, this is all so happy," Hago said, rolling his eyes. "You still haven't said anything about how you're going to try and stop Tojo. The key word being *try*."

"Why don't you just leave us alone?" Simba snarled. He wished that he could wrap his claws around the villain's neck and strangle him to death. But if he tried anything, then his paws would just go right through him...

"I have no intention of ever leaving you alone," Hago told them. "Since I can't have a body of my own, I'm going to devote my time to annoying you. It should provide some entertainment to the usually dull days."

"He had a plan to take over Tojo's body," Simba explained to Zazu, "but it backfired and now he's stuck as a ghost."

"Aghost?" Zazu screamed, and plummeted to the ground, unconscious in an instant.

"Not a fan of ghosts, then," Haiba said, glancing at the motionless hornbill. "I don't mind them myself. Not you, though, Hago. I don't kiss psychopaths."

"We're really losing touch with what's important right now," Simba reminded them all. "Tojo. We have to figure out a way to get him back to normal."

"You can't!" Hago yelled.

"Yes, we can!" Simba shot back, determined. "It's obvious that there must be some way to reverse this. You just don't want to tell us!"

"But what would convince him that he's not Hago?" Nala wondered.

"What else?" Simba replied. "Himself. We need to remind him, somehow, that deep down there's a cub called Tojo still in there. Your personality can't just be replaced—it's not something that leaves you for ever. It's always there. Even if sometimes you don't know it."

"This is ridiculous..." Hago muttered, shaking his head. "I can't believe you're even saying such outlandish things."

Simba just ignored him. He wasn't going to listen to that monster anymore. It was all his fault, anyway. His horrible plan had gone all wrong and turned Tojo into something that he wasn't. Now it was up to them to return him to his true, pure self. Otherwise he was going to be stuck that way for ever, causing widespread destruction across the earth.

"Someone has to get through to him," Haiba said. "Someone who really knows him."

"I'll do it," Tama said, looking up at them. Her eyes were all red and puffy from crying so much. "I know him better than all of you. I love him. Love is the only thing that will ever bring him back to his old self." She felt slightly optimistic. The plan didn't seem impossible. Very unlikely? Yes. But not impossible.

Simba nodded. "We'll come with you," he said.

"No." Tama shook her head. "I have to do this by myself. Undisturbed. We need to be alone if we're going to have a proper connection with each other. I can't focus on anyone or anything else. Just him. It's the only way."

Simba and Nala glanced at each other, unsure. They didn't want to put Tama in this kind of danger to begin with, let alone by herself. Tojo had very powerful abilities right now. One wave of the staff and Tama could be reduced to dust. There was no telling how he might react.

Tama rose to her paws, and walked off without saying anything. She was completely focused on what she had to do. If she couldn't bring Tojo back, then there was no hope. No reason to live any longer.

Simba and the others watched her leave, hoping that she would return safely. And with Tojo back to his old self, too.

Hago, however, was just smiling. Truly believing that Tama didn't have a chance.

But there was no way for any of them to tell.

AN: No cliffhanger. Just room for speculation. It looks like Hago has made a horrible mistake and inadvertently created a miniature version of himself. Now it seems that Tama is Tojo's only hope. Can he be returned to normal? Find out tomorrow!

Chapter 7: Chapter 7: The Last Hope

AN: Lots of speculation about what this final chapter will contain. Lots and lots. But it's finally here. The wait is over. I'm sure it'll make your day.

Chapter Seven: The Last Hope

"Tojo!" Tama was calling his name as loud as she could, hoping to draw him out. She wasn't looking for a fight. Not at all. She just wanted to talk to him. Get through to his true mind and soul that had been locked away by Hago's failure of a plan. "Tojo! Come out here! I just want to talk!"

She could tell that he was around. Could feel his presence hanging in the air. Normally, the knowledge that Tojo was around her made her feel happy. But now it filled her heart with dread. The thought of what he had become... Well, it horrified her. If there was any chance of fixing things, then she at least had to try. If not, then it was the end for her. She knew it. There would be nothing else left to live for. Not without him.

"Tojo... come on... I know you're there," Tama said, peering nervously around the side of a tree. She hoped that he wouldn't pop straight out of nowhere and blast her into smithereens. They needed just a few minutes to talk...

She heard someone creep up from behind her. "Tama. You dare to show your face around this jungle again?"

Tama slowly turned around to face her former lover. He was glaring at her with pure hate, the magical staff trained on her. "Tojo... I just want to talk to you. I'm not here for a fight. I don't want any trouble."

"You should have thought about that," Tojo replied, "before you destroyed my chance for retirement."

Tama sighed. He still thought he was Hago. In fact, it was highly likely that he had forgotten completely who he used to be. "Tojo... please. You're not someone called Hago. Your name is Tojo. *Tojo*. Don't you remember that?"

"I *hate* the name Tojo," he spat venomously. "I would spit on *anyone* with that name. Why would you even think that I went by that name?"

"It's that staff," Tama said, indicating it with her eyes. "It's changed you. You only *think* you're someone called Hago. It's completely altered your mind."

Tojo laughed. "Don't be so ridiculous," he said, turning away from her. "I have been Hago and always will be. All the power of the universe is in my command. And even if I *was* someone called Tojo, then why would I ever want to go back to being such a pathetic creature?"

"For me," Tama said, taking a step towards him. Staring tenderly into his eyes. "For me, Tojo. We love each other." She placed a paw on top of his. "Don't you remember?"

Tojo yanked his paw out from underneath her, and struck her across the face. "I remember only my purpose," he told her, as she fell to the ground. "And my purpose is to enslave the world. Once I've finished with you, of course." He readied the staff for a killing blow.

"Tojo..." Tama wanted to say something else—anything—but she just couldn't. Only his name. The most important thing about him. It represented his identity. And what was he without that? Nothing.

"I'll make sure that nothing is left of you," Tojo told her, as the top end of the staff began to glow a bleak black. "This Death Spell is instant."

Tama's heart sank into her stomach as she watched Tojo prepare himself to finally finish her off. She'd had her chance, and she'd failed. Even her very best attempts at trying to establish an emotional connection were useless. Hago's stupid plan had completely taken away his soul. It was more heartbreak than she could bear. She just wanted Tojo to kill her and end this nightmare...

Just as Tojo was about to place the end of the staff against her chest, a cruel laugh rang through the air. "Who dares to interrupt my execution?" he yelled, turning around angrily to face the culprit.

The spirit of Hago was walking calmly towards Tojo, a thin smile crossing his muzzle. "Tojo, you have done absolutely splendidly. Everything has gone *just* the way I wanted it to. How... perfect."

Tama stared at the ghost in shock. "What do you want?" she asked. "What are you talking about?"

"Oh, Tama," Hago said, rolling his eyes at her. "I think you've learnt by now that I always have a hidden agenda." He glanced at an equally bemused Tojo. "Dear little Tojo here has been a crucial part of my plan right from the start."

"Your plan failed," Tama said, still not fully realising what Hago was telling her. "That's why he's like this."

"That's just what I *told* you," replied Hago. "I said nothing about it being the *truth*. You just failed to call my bluff."

"I demand that you stop speaking now!" Tojo ordered, ready to annihilate Hago. But of course he couldn't do anything. The former wizard was only a ghost. Every attack would just travel right through him.

"You have severe delusions of power, boy," Hago told him, unfazed. "Everything you have done up until this point was anticipated by me."

"Explain yourself," Tojo said. "*Now!*"

Hago chuckled. "Oh, this is so rich," he said. "All I wanted from you, Tojo, was the staff. I need it. As soon as I touch it, I will be returned to full fighting form. I just wanted to use you as a carrier for it. And now that we're both here—alone and undisturbed—I can finally begin with my resurrection. Now, give me the staff!"

"Then why is he acting like you?" Tama asked, raising an eyebrow. "You can't have known that was going to happen."

"The staff chooses who gets the magic," Hago explained. "Not me. Tojo must have already had some serious emotional problems *long* before I showed up... It chose him. I saw that as an opportunity—to come back and make my *glorious* return!"

"You will never get this staff," Tojo declared, clutching it to his chest. "*Never!* Do you hear me?"

Hago growled and made a swipe for the staff, but Tojo dodged around his side and managed to evade him. "You're only making this harder on yourself, you little mite."

"So what happens to him when you get it?" Tama asked, looking surprisingly optimistic. Maybe he would be returned to normal—and then they could defeat Hago!

"Oh, Tojo will return to normal," Hago told her, much to Tama's delight. "Unharméd—luckily. But as soon as I get my powers back, both of you will die!"

Oh, yes! Tama thought happily. *Yes! Yes! Yes!*

"I want that staff!" Hago snarled. "I demand to be in control of it!"

"*You will not enslave me,*" Tojo said, in a deep throaty voice. Both Tama and Hago stared at him, stunned. "*You will not take me over.*"

"Huh?" Tama didn't get it. "Why is he speaking like that?"

Hago narrowed his eyes, ever so curious. "Oh, it can't be..."

"*None shall ever enslave me ever again,*" Tojo declared. "*I will be my own master.*"

"What?" Tama turned to Hago. "Tell me what's going on!"

"It's not Tojo," said Hago, shocked. "It's the staff."

Tojo's eyes were glowing a bright green. "*I will be my own master,*" he said. "*My magic is mine and mine only to control.*"

"The staff... it's been using him as a host," Hago said, utterly stunned. "It's using him as a body."

"*I will transfer my magic into this cub,*" Tojo said, "*and then spread death and destruction across the world.*"

"The *staff* is a living thing?" Tama exclaimed, boggling at the insane sight. "But how is that possible?"

"Its magic is so strong, it must have developed a conscious for itself." Hago was struggling to explain it. It sounded like even *he* was having a hard time understanding what was going on. "It thinks it's a living thing."

"*I am a living thing!*" Tojo declared, patting his chest. "*Ever since Tojo touched me, I began to bond myself with his soul. Now I have completely taken it over. The cub you once knew is now gone for ever.*"

Tama stood there, rigid. All the optimism drained out of her in an instant as she began to absorb the truth. The staff had replaced Tojo's soul with that of his own. It had erased him completely.

Tojo was gone for good.

She trembled, her legs turning to jelly. "N-no," she mumbled, tears already flowing down her cheeks. "No, no..."

"You can't do this!" Hago yelled, seething with rage. "Only I will be control of my magic!"

"But it's not your magic," said Tojo, dropping the staff to the ground. He wouldn't be needing it anymore. *"It's mine. And now I will use it to make sure that you never bother me again. I've followed your plans the way you wanted me to for so long now. Well, it seems that this one finally gave me the opportunity I needed to have a life of my own. Goodbye, Hago."* His eyes began to glow green as he focused his powers.

"No! No!" Hago screamed, but it was too late. A wave of emptiness suddenly washed over him, as he looked down to see his body slowly fading away. "No!"

"Yes!" Tojo shouted, his eyes glowing brighter than the sun. *"Back into the darkness, Hago! This time for ever!"*

"No... No... No..." More and more of Hago's body slowly began to fade away. Within a matter of seconds, he had disappeared from existence completely. It was as if he had never been there.

And he would never come back again.

"Now to deal with the loose ends," said Tojo, although he couldn't exactly be called by that name anymore. He looked down on Tama, who was crying her heart out onto the ground. But he didn't care. *"I could feel Tojo's essence while scraps of his soul still existed. He really did love you, you know. Not that it matters much now."* He raised his forepaws, on which glowing green orbs of energy began to form. As soon as they struck, there would be nothing left of Tama.

'Tojo' laughed victoriously at the top of his voice, knowing that with Tama's death his plan would be complete. He fired off the orbs of energy—

—just as Tama crashed right into him.

'Tojo' grunted in surprise as Tama sent him sliding across the ground on his back. She looked livid. Ready to boil over with rage. "What do you think you're doing?"

"Finishing this," Tama replied, and began to strangle 'Tojo' with all her might. She couldn't even bear to look at him. She closed her eyes and silently did her work.

But 'Tojo' was stronger than he was letting on. With an easy push, he shoved Tama from his body and sent her flying right into a tree. She slipped to the ground, landing right beside Hago's golden staff. It was completely devoid of magical energy now, though. No use to anyone.

'Tojo' prepared some bolts of energy to strike Tama with. "You are far more meddlesome than I first imagined. I shall take great pleasure in your death."

Tama wasn't looking at him. Her eyes fell upon the staff. She noticed the sharpened end at the bottom. With tears in her eyes, she grabbed the staff, jumped up into the air—

—and plunged it straight through his chest.

'Tojo' fell back in shock, landing against a tree trunk. He stared down at the golden staff protruding from his chest, unable to stop himself from gagging as he coughed up a copious amount of blood. His wide eyes were firmly focused on Tama, who simply stared back. Not saying a word.

As the magical entity began to perish, the last miniscule scrap of Tojo's soul finally filtered away into nothingness.

"Tama... I love you."

And then he died.

Tama just stood there for what seemed like eternity, sobbing at the knowledge that she had killed the only cub she had ever loved. She closed her eyes as tightly as she possibly could, not wanting to ever open them again. Her life felt broken. More so than it ever had been before.

"I'm sorry," she cried. "I'm so... sorry."

Three Hours Later...

Simba, Nala and Haiba had left Tama to sleep in a vine hammock they had found in the resort. After she hadn't returned for quite some time, the three cubs got worried and went to find her. When they eventually came across Tojo's body and found her sobbing her eyes out, it didn't take them long to put two and two together.

She had killed him. They didn't know why, but she had killed Tojo.

The death had a hard effect on all of them. They had barely spoken to each other all day. That evening, Simba and Nala sat by each other at the riverside.

"She's been asleep for hours now," Nala said, speaking properly for the first time in ages. "Do you think she'll ever wake up?"

"Let her rest," Simba replied. "She needs it."

"What are we going to do now?" Nala asked. She looked ready to burst into tears herself. "Everything's all gone so horribly wrong."

"We need Tama's help," Simba said, although he didn't like to admit it. In a small way, they were going to use her now to get what they wanted. "She needs to find out about this spell. It's the only way."

"Do you think Hago will ever come back?" Nala asked. "We don't know where he went."

Simba shrugged. "I don't know," he said. "If you ask me, I think he's finally had his last plan go up in smoke."

Nala thought about Tojo, lying dead somewhere in the middle of the jungle. "Yeah..." She rested her head gently against his shoulder. "I'm very grateful to have you. Just thought you should know."

Simba nodded. "Me, too."

"Simba... do you think we're ever going to be happy again?"

"I don't know," Simba replied, and what he spoke was the truth. "I just don't know."

And as they sat there, with the dying sunlight casting a purple tint across the sky, it seemed that happiness didn't exist any longer.

The End

AN: It's official that I'll be dead by tomorrow for doing that. I expect the angry mob to come for me wielding burning torches and pitchforks. Tojo is dead? Well, yes. Very sad, I know. But... it is for a reason. Isn't everything in this series? Oh, well. I'll see you soon with the next story. If I'm not dead, that is.

NEXT TIME: The cubs ask Tama for her help, and are led to an evil serpent...